

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Clean and Sanitize the Kitchen



Cleaning and sanitizing the kitchen are essential steps in preventing foodborne illness. It is important to remember that not every appliance should be cleaned in the same way.

Always follow manufacturer instructions for cleaning and sanitizing equipment; however, below are general guidelines for cleaning and sanitizing various food contact surfaces and equipment.

Wash

Wash dishes, utensils, and other surfaces that touch food, such as refrigerator drawers, with hot, soapy water. Rinse with clean, drinkable water.

Sanitize

Mix 1 cup of regular, unscented household bleach with 5 gallons of water, or use 1 tablespoon of regular, unscented household bleach for every 1 gallon of water.

Wear rubber gloves to avoid skin irritation. Water should not be hot as this can weaken the bleach.

To sanitize **pans, dishes, glassware, and utensils**, submerge items either in a bleach solution for 15 minutes or in boiling water.

For sanitizing **metal utensils, silverware, and pots and pans**, submerge items in boiling water for 10 minutes. Using a bleach solution may cause the metal to darken.

Using a cloth, wipe counter tops and outer surfaces of kitchen appliances with bleach mixture, and let air dry.

Food storage containers

Do not put storage containers in the dishwasher unless the product is marked dishwasher safe. If no instructions for cleaning are listed, wash in warm soapy water, paying attention to crevasses and indentations where food can get stuck. Rinse thoroughly and dry completely before storing.

Cloths and potholders

Launder dishcloths and potholders on the hot cycle in the washer and dryer to destroy harmful bacteria.

Inspect cookware

Discard bowls, cups, cutting boards, or utensils made of soft, porous material, such as wood or plastic, that have come in contact with flood water. These items absorb water and may be unsafe to use.

Removing mold

Hard plastic, glass, and metal that have mold can be cleaned with warm water and soap. To remove mold from kitchen cabinets or hard non-porous surfaces, scrub with detergent and water, then dry thoroughly.

Sanitize hard surfaces such as counter tops, flatware, stoves, sinks, plates, and tools with **1 cup regular, unscented household bleach per 1 gallon of water**. If surfaces are rough, scrub with a stiff brush, rinse surfaces with clean water, and air dry.





Oven

Before cleaning an oven, make sure it is cool and no pots or pans are inside. Follow manufacturer instructions.

Oven cleaners made for a cold oven are more potent than those made for a hot oven. Pay close attention to the recommendations on cleaners. Additionally, do not use oven cleaners on self-cleaning ovens as this may damage the oven's surface.

Another method for cleaning an oven is placing $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of household ammonia in a bowl and putting it in a cool, closed oven overnight or for at least 4 hours.

After 4 hours, remove and wash racks in warm soapy water to remove burned-on food. Wash the oven walls and doors with a mixture of $\frac{1}{2}$ cup ammonia and 1 quart warm water. Wipe down the oven walls and doors.

Finally, wash the oven walls and doors one last time with warm, soapy water, rinse, and wipe dry.

Microwave

Follow manufacturer instructions. Do not use oven cleaner, steel wool, or abrasive cleaners in a microwave.

To remove caked-on food, heat **one of these options** in the microwave, in a microwave-safe dish, until the mixture boils:

- 6 tablespoons baking soda with 1 cup water
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup lemon juice with 1 cup water

Leave the mixture in the microwave with the door closed until it cools. Remove mixture and wipe microwave with a cloth or paper towel.

Kitchen sink and disposal

Wash and disinfect the kitchen sink once or twice a week with either a disinfectant cleaner or a mixture of 1 tablespoon regular, unscented household bleach per 1 gallon of water. Sanitize drains and disposals monthly by pouring 1 tablespoon bleach in 1 quart of water down the drain. Wash sink strainers weekly.

Coffeemakers

Follow manufacturer instructions. General recommendations:

- Decalcify the machine by adding 4 cups vinegar to the reservoir, letting it stand for 30 minutes, then running it through the unit.
- Follow up by running two to three cycles of fresh water. Clean every 40 to 80 cycles, or once a month.



Sponges

Kitchen sponges can contain harmful bacteria and carry viruses; however, there are safe, effective ways to clean:

- **Bleach soak:** use $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of regular, unscented household bleach for every 1 gallon of water, and soak sponges for 5 minutes. Rinse thoroughly. Let air dry before using.
- **Dishwasher:** ideally, the dishwasher should reach 155°F and include a heated dry cycle.
- **Microwave:** wet the sponge, and microwave it for 2 minutes. Heating a dry sponge can cause a fire, so make sure the sponge is completely wet. Let air dry before using.

Do not microwave metallic padded kitchen sponges. If planning to reuse, run them through the dishwasher.

Cleaning a refrigerator or freezer

Wash shelves, drawers, and other removable parts by hand with hot, soapy water. When cleaning the refrigerator or freezer, store perishable food temporarily in a cooler to prevent harmful bacteria from growing. Discard spoiled or questionable food.

- **Shelves, drawers, and other removable parts:** Using a cloth, sanitize with 1 tablespoon of regular, unscented household bleach mixed with 1 gallon of water. Let air dry.
- **Doors and interior:** mix 2 teaspoons of baking soda with 1 quart of water. Wash doors and interior of refrigerator and freezer. Rinse with a bleach solution.
- Leave the door open for 15 minutes to allow air drying before refilling refrigerator.



Refrigerator odors

Try one of these options to get rid of lingering odors:

- Wipe down the appliance with a 1:1 ratio of vinegar and water to destroy mildew.
- Stuff appliances with old rolled newspapers and leave closed for several days before cleaning with vinegar and water.
- Place a large shallow container of fresh coffee grounds or baking soda on the bottom of the appliance.
- Soak a cotton swab in vanilla, and place it inside the refrigerator or freezer with the door closed for 24 hours.

Dishwasher odors

Follow specific manufacturer instructions. Below are suggestions from the *Whirlpool® & Kenmore® appliance companies for removing odors from a dishwasher using vinegar and baking soda:

- Clean the filter at the bottom of the dishwasher for food, debris, glass, or other obstructions.
- Pour 2 cups of white vinegar into a glass measuring cup and place it upright on the dishwasher's lower rack. Do not add detergent. Run a normal cycle with heated dry off.
- After the cycle is complete, sprinkle 1 cup baking soda in the dishwasher and run again on a hot water cycle.

Additional Option: if available, use the home dishwasher sanitizing cycle for cleaning non-porous materials such as acrylic or glass.

**University of Illinois provides this information as a courtesy and does not endorse any company, products, or services over another.*

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